

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS  
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**Lennox School District  
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2002-2003**

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**Dates of On Site Visit:** February 24 – 26, 2003

**Date of Report:** March 8, 2003

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This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by the Office of Special Education. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

<b>Promising Practice</b>	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
<b>Meets Requirements</b>	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
<b>Needs Improvement</b>	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
<b>Out of Compliance</b>	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
<b>Not applicable</b>	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

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<b>Principle 1 – General Supervision</b>
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General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

**Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive Plan
- TAT and Referral Data
- Educator & Administrator Surveys
- Head Start Agreement

- Pre-school Screening
- Child Find Activities
- State Data Table

### **Promising practice**

The district's curriculum director coordinates a mentor program for all new teachers. Veteran teachers serve as mentors who are trained to work with new staff members. New staff members, or mentees, meet several times during the year to receive in-service training on district policy and procedures – including special education. This is also a time to ask questions of the administrative staff involved with the training sessions. New special education teachers work closely with mentors to learn the rules and regulations, including evaluation procedures. New teachers may receive 1 graduate credit for the mentorship and the teacher mentor receives a stipend from the district.

### **Meets requirements**

The district communicates with home school parents and home schooled students are included in state and district wide testing. Related services are provided to home schooled students by the Lennox School District. The district has implemented an ongoing child find system to locate, identify and evaluate children with disabilities, age's birth through 21 years who may need special education. The district uses data based decision-making procedures to review and analyze school district-level data to determine if the school district is making progress towards the state performance goals and indicators. The steering committee determined that the district has certified staff, with one exception of a special education teacher, who is teaching under the authority to act.

### **Needs improvement**

The district provides child find activities through public announcements and notices, but does not consult with the private schools unless they are making a referral.

The district provides in-service training to paraprofessionals that are in accordance with the district requirements, but the "No Child Left Behind" requirements will dictate the necessity for all paraprofessional staff to obtain college training.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Promising Practice**

The monitoring team validated that the Lennox School District provides a mentor program for all new teachers.

#### **Meets Requirements**

The monitoring team was in agreement with all the items presented by the steering committee in the "meets requirements" category.

#### **Needs Improvement**

The monitoring team validated the items listed in the "needs improvement" category. The monitoring team suggested that the district develop a more systematic approach to ensure records and assessment data are maintained in the student's master file.

#### **Out of Compliance**

#### **ARSD 24:05:17:03 Annual report of children served**

During a review of student files to verify the district's annual child count the, team identified 4 students who did not have an IEP in place on December 1, 2001. The district will have federal funds withheld from the IDEA funds for these students.

## **Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education**

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive Plan
- Surveys
- Staff Interviews
- Child Count Data
- Tables I,J,K,
- IEPs
- Consolidated Grant Participants

### **Promising practice**

The district provides a before and after school program for students K-5. This makes available an agenda of worthwhile activities and homework help for students before or after school.

The district benefits from a police liaison office in attendance at Lennox High School. Through a grant (Lincoln County sheriff dept.) a deputy sheriff is in attendance at LHS two ½ days a week.

The district has a cooperative agreement with Head Start (USD) which provides an inclusionary preschool for students with special needs attending preschool with students without disabilities. This occurs in both Tea Primary School and Lennox Elementary.

The district uses positive and proactive procedures to address misconduct with the Peace Builders Program and district training (continuing) on the “Love and Logic” methods.

For students with severe speech needs, the district collaborates with the Scottish Rite Speech & Language clinic. Our students receive extra S/L therapy and USD students working toward their S/L degree gain valuable experience working with our students.

### **Meets requirements**

Administrative staff has received instruction on policy and procedures regarding suspension and expulsion of a student with disabilities.

The placement alternatives for the district indicate 66% or more of students with disabilities are educated in the regular classroom with modifications. Inclusion is in place at all educational levels.

### **Needs improvement**

The district needs to continue to survey parents and staff for feedback regarding services and programs for students and staff training.

## **Validation Results**

### **Promising practice**

A community education person is employed by the district to provide structured day care service to K-5 students after school. Students can complete homework or participate in games and activities in a supervised environment until parents are able to pick them up after work.

A grant program allows a Lincoln county deputy sheriff to spend two ½ days at the Lennox High School. This opportunity allows students to build a positive relationship with law enforcement officials and to understand consequences of breaking the law. The program also provides opportunity for parent involvement through informational meetings.

The cooperative agreement with Head Start provides the district with an inclusionary preschool program for children with special needs. The district provides certified staff to implement services to 2 groups of children during a 4½ day per week program. Teachers are provided training necessary to meet Head Start requirements and Head Start provides much of the material and equipment to run the program.

The district has adopted the “Peace Builders Program” and “Love and Logic” methods as a basis to address misconduct issues with students. The philosophy supports positive intervention strategies and proactive procedures that assist students in taking responsibility for their actions.

The district collaborates with the Scottish Rite Speech and Language clinic. This provides students with practice above and beyond the related services stated in their IEPs.

### **Meets requirements**

The review team was in agreement with the items listed in the “meets requirements.”

### **Needs improvement**

The review team was in agreement with the items listed in the “needs improvement.”

## **Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation**

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Parent Surveys
- Educators Surveys
- Administrator Surveys
- Comprehensive Plan
- Student File Reviews
- MDT Reports for SLD

**Promising practice**

The district has a yearly agreement with the USD School of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry to provide a school-based training site for two child/adolescent psychiatric residents. These doctors then each complete a 10-week rotation in our school setting.

Based on feedback from the steering committee, the district has been complimented on the utilization of outside agency involvement in the assessment and evaluation process of our students.

**Meets requirements**

The district ensures the evaluations or reevaluation procedures and instruments meet state requirements. A variety of assessment tools are used to evaluate within the 25-day timeline.

The IEP teams conduct and consider all evaluations in eligibility determinations. The district provides documentation of eligibility determination to the parents.

**Needs improvement**

The district should work toward increasing parental input into the evaluation process.

The district should work to increase the use of functional assessments.

**Validation Results****Promising practice**

The monitoring team concluded the University of South Dakota Psychiatric fellowship program is a unique opportunity for families. Parent permission is obtained for the child/adolescent psychiatric resident to review the file of the student, visit with the parent and participate in the IEP meeting. The resident acts as a consultant at the IEP meeting and provides a medical perspective for student or family issues.

The monitoring team could not validate that the use of outside agency involvement in evaluation was a promising practice, as evaluation procedures for the district were found to be out of compliance.

**Meets requirements**

The monitoring team could not validate that evaluation and reevaluation procedures met the state and federal regulations.

**Needs improvement**

The monitoring team validated that parental input and functional evaluation was not consistently a part of the evaluation process and these items have been moved to the “out of compliance” area. The monitoring team could not validate that all assessment data was being considered for determining eligibility, as multi-disciplinary reports were not always in the student files for SLD students.

**Out of compliance****ARSD 24:05:03:17 Prior Notice to Evaluate**

The review team located nine files where consent to evaluate was not followed according to the written prior notice for consent. Assessments were given that were not listed on the consent form and some tests that were listed were not provided.

**ARSD 24:05:25:04 Evaluation Procedures**

School districts shall ensure a child is assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability and the evaluation procedures include a variety of assessment tools and strategies. The evaluations are to gather

relevant functional and developmental information about the child, including information provided by parents to assist in developing the content of the child's IEP. In 12 student files reviewed the monitoring team found that district staff did not include functional information in the evaluation process. In 6 additional files, functional information was available; however, the data was not analyzed and written as a report so the IEP team could develop present levels of performance that linked to evaluation.

A multi-disciplinary report with appropriate content needs to be in the student file for students with a specific learning disability. The multi-disciplinary report was not found for three students with specific learning disabilities. In three student files the appropriate team membership was not in attendance for the multi-disciplinary meeting.

Parent input into the planning of evaluations needs to be provided and documented in the student's file. The monitoring team found no documentation of parent input into the planning of student evaluations in eighteen student files.

By age sixteen transition assessments need to be provided and assessment results need to be a part of the comprehensive evaluation. The transition data should be summarized and utilized for functional evaluation in the transition area. The transition data should be the basis for program planning in the transition area and be linked to the present levels of performance for transition. Transition evaluations were not administered in 3 of 4 files reviewed; therefore, present levels of performance were not developed and included in the students IEP. The steering committee noted transition assessment as an area in need of improvement under Principle 5, Individual Education Program. The need to conduct transition assessments was also confirmed by the review team through staff interviews.

## **Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards**

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive Plan
- Parental Rights Brochure
- IDEA Regulations
- Parent Surveys
- Student File Reviews
- Data Table L

### **Meets requirements**

The district has policies and procedures supporting the implementation of confidentiality and access to records.

The consent provides all information relevant to the activity for which it is sought. A five-day written prior notice is given to parents. The parent's are notified and fully informed in their native language. The parents are provided with the opportunity to inspect and review all records of the child.

**Needs improvement**

The parent surveys indicate the need to fully inform the parents of the importance of an IEP. The district is in the process of introducing a file folder of information and a glossary of special education terms for parents.

**Validation Results****Meets requirement**

The monitoring team was in agreement with all items listed in the “meets requirements” category, with the exception of prior notice for consent to evaluate, which is previously addressed under principle three evaluation procedures.

**Needs improvement**

The monitoring team was in agreement with the items listed in the “needs improvement” category. The monitoring team felt the district should consistently state on the prior notice for students age fourteen and older that the purpose of the meeting would be to discuss transition.

<b>Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program</b>
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The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

**Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive Plan
- Student File Reviews
- Teacher and Parent Surveys
- Teacher Mentor Program
- Prior Notice for Meetings
- IEPs
- State Data Tables F & K

**Promising practice**

Information is shared with regular education staff about students on IEPs. The transition between 5<sup>th</sup> grade to middle school and between 8<sup>th</sup> grade to high school includes a “pre” visit to the new building and meeting of the new teachers.

The district maintains a mentor program for all new teachers. Veteran teachers serve as mentors who are trained to work with new staff members. New staff members, or mentees, meet several times during the year to receive in-service training on district policy and procedures – including special education. This is also a time to ask questions of the administrative staff involved with the training sessions. New special education teachers work closely with mentors to learn the rules and regulations, including evaluation procedures.

The Power School program at the high school maintains individual student data that can be accessed by parents upon request. Middle school parents can call the homework hot line to check on student assignments.

**Meets requirements**

The district has policies and procedures in place for the development of an appropriate student IEP. The IEP team is comprised of appropriate team members. Every IEP is unique to that individual. The general educators and special educators work closely together and the general educators play an active part in the IEP process.

**Needs improvement**

The district is working to improve the implementation of students' transition needs through the IEP process.

The steering committee indicated that functional assessments should be consistently performed ensuring that student's present levels of performance reflect skill-based data.

**Validation Results****Promising practice**

The monitoring team concluded the visits conducted with students moving from the 5<sup>th</sup> grade to middle school and from 8<sup>th</sup> grade to High School assisted in smooth transitions for students. Special education students and their teachers do a pre-visit to see their new building and meet the new teachers. All students participate in a visit and orientation in the spring each year.

Information regarding the mentor program is included under Principle 1, General Supervision.

The Power School program and the homework hotline provide an excellent opportunity for families to keep up to date with their child's current grades, attendance and homework assignments. The program is a web-based program. Parents have an individual password and can access the student information as often as they wish.

**Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with all but one of the areas in the "meets requirements" category. In six student files reviewed the appropriate team membership was not present at the IEP meeting, and this item has been moved to the "out of compliance" category.

**Needs improvement**

The monitoring team identified the items listed in the "needs improvement" category as required elements for transition and functional evaluation and has placed them in the "out of compliance" category.

The following item was added to the "needs improvement" category. The monitoring team felt the school district needed to ensure that the updated progress on the student's goals and objectives was documented in the student's master file.

**Out of compliance****ARSD 24:05:27:01.03 IEP Content**

In three student files reviewed the transition needs were not based on assessment and a coordinated set of activities was not in place to assist the student with obtaining their post high school goals. Transition activities need to be based on assessment and the specifics stated in the transition area of the IEP. In reviewing files of transition age students, there were nine files that did not include transition in the present levels of performance.

Through student file review it was evident that the student's present level of performance was not linked to functional evaluation data. In twelve of the student files reviewed the present level of performance lacked the required components. The present levels of performance need to be skill specific in



relationship to the student's disability area and transition. The present levels also need to include parental input and how the student is progressing in the general curriculum.

The annual goal needs to be observable and based on the student's present levels of performance. The short term objectives or annual goals need to have conditions, performance and criteria listed. In eleven of the student's files the annual goals and objectives did not include the required content.

The IEP team needs to review the continuum of services using the accept/reject format and justify the team's decision for placement of the student in the least restrictive environment. In six files reviewed the justification for student placement described the services to be provided instead of the justification for the selected placement.

## **Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment**

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive Plan
- State Data Table F
- Student File Reviews
- Surveys
- IEPs

### **Promising practice**

Employment Skills III class has students working in the community. Teacher contacts employers to determine grade performance.

The district preschool program integrates children on IEPs with children from Head Start that are not on IEPs.

### **Meets requirements**

The district has policies and procedures in place to support the least restrictive environment. The Lennox School District provides students with placement options across a continuum of services. Students are served in settings other than the regular classroom only when the nature or severity of their disability is such that education in general classes with the use of supplemental aids and services can not be achieved satisfactorily.

The paraprofessionals are used in the general education classrooms to provide curriculum assistance to teachers and students.

### **Needs improvement**

The administration would like to see more "true" co-teaching occurring. Presently special education teachers provide more aide type assistance in the classrooms.

The steering committee determined that the district has a lack of appropriate modified grade level instructional materials based on general education curriculum and content standards.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Promising practice**

The monitoring team agreed the integrated preschool and Head Start program is a promising practice for the district. Refer to Principle 1, General Supervision for more information.

#### **Meets Requirements**

The monitoring team was in agreement with the items in the “meets requirements” category.

#### **Needs improvement**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas of the “needs improvement” category.